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MR. [✓]BARNARD'S ADDRESS,
BEFORE THE
LITERARY SOCIETIES
OF
GENEVA COLLEGE.



AN
ADDRESS
DELIVERED BEFORE
THE LITERARY SOCIETIES
OF
GENEVA COLLEGE,

AT THE ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT OF THAT INSTITUTION,

AUGUST 6, 1834.

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BY D. D. BARNARD.

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ADDRESS.

I appear here, in answer to an invitation with which I have been honored from the Literary Societies of Geneva College ; and it is the members of these Societies to whom I am expected to address myself on the present occasion.

Allow me then, Gentlemen, to begin with saying that I shall esteem myself most fortunate and happy, if, on an occasion of so much interest to yourselves, and to all who have at heart the success of this Institution and the cause of Education, I may be able to lead your minds into any train of just and profitable reflection. For myself, it may not become me to say more, or perhaps less, than that my connection with western New-York, commencing in a personal residence here, which was continued through a series of interesting and valuable years, and resting still on some of the strongest of human ties, makes me naturally anxious to render myself, if possible, essentially useful in the exercise to which I am now called ; and, at least, to take care that the opportunity shall not be wholly lost, by any unworthy attempt on my part at exhibition or display.

A college commencement is an occasion of anxious concern to every student who is old enough, and wise enough, to have any moments of serious reflection ; and especially is it so to those, who, having completed their academic course, are about to enter on the duties and

responsibilities of active life. Such, my friends, is now the condition of some of your number ; and the thought of what will be required and expected of you as scholars, in your future career, must of necessity fill you with strong solicitude ; and you will naturally be glad to employ any light, however feeble, which shall promise to aid you in the vision which you are straining to catch of the prospect just opening around and before you.

Those who take the benefits of a full course of academic instruction, place themselves in relations of peculiar and sacred interest with society. Together they are the natural and proper Conservators of the Body of Learning belonging to their period ; and to them, as the regular Priesthood of its Mysteries, are committed the charge and keeping of its Temples and its Records, its Altars, and the Fire that burns on them.

But this is not all. Those who minister in this service, have not merely in charge the preservation of a faith once delivered. Whatsoever is already ascertained, and made certain by the test of those immutable laws which govern the subject, *is* to be preserved and perpetuated. But there are mighty errors to be overthrown ; and, while old truths are to be confirmed, new ones are to be developed and established.

The cause of Education is assuming fresh interest every day. Perhaps it is not too much to say that it is only now beginning to be well understood what Learning really is—in what it consists ; what uses it properly subserves ; and how nearly it is connected with the higher destiny of man, both on the earth and in the heavens.

Those of you who have now received the honors of this Institution, have become members of the Commonwealth of Letters. You are to take a responsible share, not in its preservation only, but in its extension ; and it behoves you, if not already informed, to make yourself acquainted

with its history, with its present demands, and with its future prospects. And when you know that its cause is the cause of man ; and that he has not an interest present, passing, or to come ; not an interest as a physical being, or as a moral being, or as a social being, or as a religious being, which may not be affected injuriously or favorably as the cause of learning may sink or rise, remain stationary or progress : When you know all this, and know, too, how very much, for good or for evil, may depend on your individual intelligence or exertion, you will not fail to perceive, and to feel, how important and how responsible is the position which you have voluntarily assumed.

Without stopping here to advise you of any precise limits which I may have set to myself in the discussion of the topics which I propose to bring to your notice in this address, I shall proceed at once to a course of remark which may enable you to ascertain, if not already advised, with some accuracy, whereabouts you stand, when your cultivation, your attainments and your qualifications are considered, with reference to the actual state and the present and probable demands of learning.

There is a difference between Education and Learning, which it may be well to notice ; as I apprehend that young gentlemen are apt to mistake the main purpose designed to be effected by schools of instruction, and after having passed through a course in some of our higher institutions, are unfortunate enough to fancy themselves learned, when in truth they are *only* educated.

The word Education, strictly considered, is a term of limited signification. As applied to man, it has relation properly to the organs or agents of action, sensation or thought. In this sense, the muscular system may be the subject of education. In this sense, the renowned Gladiator was highly educated ; so was the Numidian horseman ; so is the Bedouin ; so are the modern common seaman and

soldier ; so is the notorious Paganini, and the no less notorious Taglioni. But the organs of the senses may and must be educated. The senses are understood to be the inlets of all knowledge. Without the use of the organs of observation, we do not know that the mind would ever be informed of any thing. We cannot say that an idea would ever enter it ; and, if not, then being without the materials of thought, the mind would never think. Hence the importance of educating these organs ; and the perfection to which they may be brought by education, is equally matter of fact and of wonder. The American Indian knows the importance of educating the eye and the ear, when he trains the young warrior to discover the scarce-marked trail, or catch the sound of the distant footfall of his enemy. The education of the hand has, in some instances, been carried to a degree of nicety almost incredible. Indeed, to the unpractised, the hand of every delicate artisan is a wonder ; but when the hand of a blind man comes to distinguish colours and shades of colour ; or when this wonderful instrument comes to delineate, in the dark and by the touch only, a greater number of regular lines within a small given space, than can be done under the direction of the eye, though aided by an instrument of the highest magnifying power, then it is that we begin to see of what perfection these organs, which are the aids and ministers of the mind, are capable. But the brain, which is the organ of thought, is capable of cultivation in precisely the same way, and in obedience to the same law. It must be furnished with the requisite materials, and then set vigorously to work upon them, in proper subjection to the immutable laws of its organization ; and the result, in the improvement and comparative perfection of its powers, will be certain and satisfactory.

Now in all our systems of education, from the narrow instruction of our primary schools, up to the higher disci-

pline of our colleges and universities, two leading objects are professedly kept in view : One, and the principal one, is the training or education of the organs of mental acquisition ; the other is the informing of the mind itself. When the powers and faculties have been properly cultivated, so that their highest capabilities for action have been brought out, then the student may be said to be well educated ; but he cannot be called learned, till, by informing his mind, he has made acquisitions of actual knowledge, of the right kind, and in the proper degree. A youth who has completed his collegiate course, is, or ought to be, well educated ; but it is scarcely possible that he should be a learned man. I do not, however, mean by this to deny that he may have made many valuable acquisitions of knowledge : I know that he may and must.* But then it should be understood, in reference to these acquisitions, that many of them, perhaps the most of them, are only, or at least chiefly, valuable, as the means of acquiring something else infinitely more valuable. The student, like the individual who is in a course of education to become a scientific miner, is engaged in preparing for a search after hidden treasures ; and not a little cultivation and knowledge are requisite, before either can begin his search with any rational hope of success : And it seems to me that the mistake could scarcely be greater, should the graduate of a German mining academy fancy himself already in actual possession and enjoyment of the precious metals, because he had been scientifically instructed in the knowledge requisite for discovering, opening and working mines ; than that the graduate of an American college should imagine himself as standing in the very midst of the great field of human

* We know of no way of training the powers of the mind, but by a process of active exercise, in the course of which, knowledge of some kind must of necessity be acquired.

learning, because he has been made acquainted with the geography of the country that surrounds it.

Moreover, Gentlemen, touching the acquisitions of knowledge actually made during the discipline of the college course, I have something more to say ; as I am disposed to believe that an erroneous estimate is often put on the advantages of education, for want of understanding the true value and the proper uses of elementary learning.

In the first place, let me remark that it is a very great error to suppose that Books are the depositaries of all learning. The great mine of knowledge is in nature ; it is in ourselves, and in the subtle air, and in the teeming earth, and in the garnished heavens ; it is in every thing which the hand touches, or the ear hears, or the eye surveys, or which, in the absence of all other modes of arresting our notice, salutes the palate or the nostrils. There was much current knowledge, and more individual knowledge in the world, before books were known ;* and since the introduction of books, the greatest men of every age have certainly not been those who have read the most of them. Sir Isaac Newton often declared that he had discovered the true system of the universe, “by constantly thinking upon it ;” and it is well known that the hint which set his thoughts in motion on this great subject, was received, not from books, but by a smart blow on the head from a falling apple. Even in the fourteenth century, Bertrand Du Guesclin, a warrior and a statesman, and the great man of his day in France, never read a book in his life, just because he did not know how to read. Now I am certainly not about to recommend this notable example to any body at the present day ; nor

* The Chinese had made some important astronomical observations within 500 years after the General Deluge ; and there were no libraries in the tent of the Chaldean shepherd, or in the bark of the Phenician mariner, to guide these philosophers in the study of the stars.

have I any desire to detract from the merits and value of books. I know that the morning of man's general civilization first broke with the introduction of letters; and that after that, it was only twilight with him until the means of multiplying manuscripts by the aid of printing, was discovered: But I also know that in all time, whenever and wherever the learning of any period has been confined to a knowledge of books, there has been an age at best of frigid imitation, often of poor puerilities and absurdities. The whole history of learning and literature is full of examples to this effect. It may be seen in the decline of Grecian literature, after the seat of learning was transferred to Alexandria. It may be seen in the translations and imitations which characterize Roman literature, from the time when the libraries of Greece first began to be carried to the Eternal City: And it may be seen in all that dark period, during which the cell and the cloister of the christian priesthood became the ark and the refuge of the learning of Europe. What I desire on this topic, is, that books shall be estimated just according to their real value. They are the records of the mighty past; and they are the great medium through which the light of all recorded and current knowledge is reflected into the mind of the student, enabling him to begin the work of observation and thought, of investigation and discovery, just at the point in his favorite study, where his most advanced and fortunate predecessor or cotemporary may have left off.

This, then, to the scholar, is the real advantage of knowing how to read. And the same reflection will enable us to discover the principal value of an acquaintance with other languages than our own, whether ancient or modern. If they record a fact, or a discovery, or a thought, or a sentiment, which is important for us to know, and which we cannot know, or cannot know

well, but by a knowledge of the language in which it is recorded, the obvious mode is to apply ourselves to master the mystery in which it is concealed. And though this is not the only advantage of a knowledge of languages, yet it is a principal one. The discipline of the mental powers by the exercise of study; the polish which the mind receives from attrition with the diamond sparks of genius scattered through his works, and which are often too perfect and too minute on his own original page to admit of translation or transfer to another; and the rich and varied power both of expression and of interpretation, which rewards the labors of the philologist in this department; are all important advantages, and tend to give and to preserve to this branch of study a conspicuous place in every well-ordered and extensive system of education. But the scholar, or he who intends to be such, will always take care to make the proper distinctions. Knowing the purpose and end to be answered, he will be careful that he do not, in his eagerness, overrun his game, and exhaust himself in a hot pursuit when there is nothing left in the field to reward his labor and fatigue.

On this subject there have been some curious, if not ludicrous mistakes. There are those who fancy themselves learned merely because they have mastered a great number of languages, and some have even entertained this flattering belief because they have acquired a knowledge of one or two, whether in addition to their own, or to the neglect of their own, is matter of uncertainty. But if this is all the self-complacent scholar shall happen to know; if he have not after opening the mine brought out the ore; or if, after having exhausted the treasures which may found in his new language, he shall still be ignorant of the commonest things within the hearing of the ear, and the sight of the eye, and the reach of the hand; if he have still no accurate knowledge of the

earth, or the air, or the sky ; and no competent acquaintance with any law of nature which may happen to lie deeper than the surface, whatever may be its relation to himself ; why his learning, such as it is, may do him no great harm, but it will certainly do him very little good.

I might indulge a train of reflection similar to the one just now offered to your notice, on the subject of the exact sciences. The study of mathematics, in all its forms and varieties, has very great value as a means of intellectual culture, when not pushed so far as to mould the mind into that kind of numerical and linear similitude to itself which unfits it for all other studies or pursuits. Within proper limits, mathematical science is eminently useful in its effects on the intellectual powers. Besides this, it is applicable, and lately more than ever, to many of the ordinary purposes of civilized life ; and then some acquaintance with it becomes indispensable to the successful prosecution of study in the various departments of natural philosophy. It is in its relation and applicability to physical science, and in the valuable aid and facility which it gives to the student of nature, that I place its highest value, as a part of a plan of liberal education.

But perhaps, gentlemen, I have already said enough to indicate the views which I entertain of the proper estimate which should be put on the advantages to be derived from the various branches of study which go to make up the usual course of instruction in our colleges. Here, in this new and valuable Institution,—which, if for no other reason, from its position in the midst of a vast tract of country already rich in population and substance, and destined, at no distant day, to be cultivated into one universal garden, is quite certain not to be sustained only, but to flourish, as it will find its aliment and the power to command support from the proper sources, in the grow-

ing necessities of an intelligent community—in this Institution, quite as much is proposed to be done, and I doubt not quite as much is done, in the course of the entire collegiate term, as ever ought to be attempted by the human mind, within the same space of time. As I have intimated before, the young gentleman who retires from this Institution after having walked the full round of its prescribed course of studies, is, or ought to be, well educated. If he have been diligent, he will be more than this. He cannot have been the subject of that severe intellectual discipline which is the prime object of the college course, and which I am sure is no where more faithfully administered than here, without being also well grounded in a wide and comprehensive sweep of elementary knowledge. He has been led on from one attainment to another, and from one elevation to another; from encounter to conquest, and from conquest to conquest, the spoils of one vanquished subject supplying the *materiel* and means of certain and successful war on the next, and so on from subject to subject in long and regular succession, until, at last, he occupies a strong, firm ground of advantage—a ground of equal eminence and responsibility.

At the same time he will himself be sensible, on a little reflection, that, as a scholar, his career is but just begun. The mere elements of knowledge, even if the whole circle of the sciences had been compassed in this way, can not make him ripe and rich in learning. An eternal wading about in the shallow waters of a sandy beach on the sea shore, can give the cautious landsman little idea of the deep waters of the mid-ocean. None but those who actually “go down to the sea in *ships*” can know what the ocean is in its majesty; not those who only trim a timid sail, on a summer’s day, in some of its narrow bays and inlets.

Besides this, in none of our colleges, so far as I am in-

formed, is it attempted to do so impossible a thing as to introduce the student even to a slight acquaintance with *every* branch of learning in the whole circle of human knowledge. And, certainly, some of the most valuable and important are, of necessity, wholly omitted. In physics, which, as a general term, includes all that various learning which I deem so indispensable, an admirable beginning is undoubtedly made—but much, very much, remains, which is not even attempted. How much, for instance, does the graduate know of the anatomy and physiology of his own frame? And if, as I shall endeavor to convince you directly, in a very brief way, it is important that he should have a competent acquaintance with nature and her laws, for the purpose of placing himself in harmony with those laws, then, to this end, it is absolutely requisite that he should understand the exact relation in which he stands to external objects, which he can never know but by a critical acquaintance with himself.

And this remark, gentlemen, naturally introduces the consideration of a topic, highly important in itself, and also as connected with the main design of my remarks; and it becomes me perhaps, as I have ventured to intimate what, in my judgment, learning is not, that I should go one step further, and venture to intimate what I think learning really and properly is. I propose to do this, however, only by inquiring what is, or ought to be the proper purpose and end of learning.

Man occupies a position on the earth which is altogether peculiar to himself. He is here the subject of laws which are immutable, which are brought to bear on his circumstances and condition in ten thousand ways, and through every instant of time, affecting his happiness, his comfort, and his safety, and from which there is one only avenue of escape, and that is, through the

extinction of his mortal existence. These laws operate upon him without intermission and without compromise. They form an essential part of his nature, and an essential part of all nature. They are, in some sort, the elements of every substance, and the substance of every element; they meet him before he breathes, and when he breathes, and while he breathes. They meet him at his entrance into life, and in his walk through life. They are above him, and beneath him, and around him, and within him: and the condition of his peace, and the condition of his life is, OBEDIENCE.

Now true it is, that the inferior animals are likewise subject to the immutable laws of nature, not one of which can be violated with impunity. But the great Author of nature has been pleased to mark a most important difference between their condition and ours. To every one of them, with the bestowment of life, and at its very threshold, he communicates directly and distinctly, in the gift of what we are pleased to call instinct, a certain and unerring acquaintance with such and so many of his laws, as are, in any way, essential to their subsistence, their safety, and the full enjoyment of the faculties with which they are respectively endowed. In this particular, they enjoy the most manifest advantage over man. They know, generally at once, all they need to know, and all they are capable of knowing. From the beginning, the measure of their capacity and the measure of their enjoyment are full. In their physical natures also, as fitting them for their proper spheres of existence and action, they are generally better endowed than man. They are less liable to disease, and less liable to accident, and only not altogether exempt from both, because it is in the economy of Providence that they should be subject to mortality.

How different, in all these respects, is man's condition on the earth! He begins existence in the extremest state

of mental and physical imbecility ; knowing nothing and then incapable of knowing any thing ; in a condition of the most abject dependence ; and withal, a being of such exquisite organization, as to combine in himself, at that period, the greatest possible amount of mortal liabilities with the least possible tenacity of mortal life. Beginning existence thus, he remains, during nearly one-third part of the whole probable limit of his earthly being, in an immature state ; acquiring stature, and strength, and capacity, by such slow and imperceptible degrees, and so full of weaknesses to the last, that nothing short of the most ample experience would convince those who watch and wait for his improvement, that the term of his pupillage would ever end, or that the time would ever come when he should be fit to be trusted with the care of his own person and affairs. And then when the prime and vigor of manhood is at last gained, how little has nature done for him, if, in the mean time, he has done nothing for himself. Without the voluntary and vigorous exertion of his powers in the acquisition of necessary knowledge on his own account, he is still nothing better than an overgrown infant ; a huge, ungoverned and ungovernable child, the very sport and jest of the created world in which he dwells.

Man, indeed, has his instincts as well as other animals. But the revelations which God has seen fit to make to him in this mode, are both few and small. They relate exclusively to the lowest offices of his animal nature ; and are never given, in any instance, as the light and guide of his footsteps, even in the humblest path he treads as a being of rational endowment—much less in that onward and upward career for which he was designed to be qualified, only by his high intellectual and moral capabilities. Of all that is essential for him to know as an intelligent creature, from the beginning of life to the end of it, absolutely nothing is communicated by intuition.

The Book of Nature is a sealed book to his untutored and uninstructed vision. The Laws which it contains, every one of which he is either commanded to obey, under great and severe penalties for disobedience, or stimulated to obey by the promise of high reward, are written in a language which he does not understand, and which is only to be comprehended by the labor of observation and study.

If it be true then, that we have, and can have, no competent knowledge of the laws of nature, but by instruction or observation; if these laws modify and govern our very mode of existence; if our exact observance of them is made the indispensable condition of health and of peace, of enjoyment and of safety; if we cannot render an intelligent obedience to laws of which we have never heard, or which we do not understand; and if our bountiful Creator has furnished us with just the very order of faculties fitted to enable us to discover, investigate and comprehend these laws, and an order of faculties which cannot be fully employed or occupied in any other way—what is plainer than that the great purpose of Learning ought to be, and when truly understood is, to bring us into communion with nature, and introduce us to a familiar acquaintance with her mysteries?

My Friends; if the legitimate end for which knowledge ought to be acquired had been better understood, or more considered, in times past, who can tell how far in advance of itself the present age might have been, in all that concerns the true dignity and honor of man, and in all that renders life desirable or tolerable? Who can run his thoughts back along the past, and contemplate what our race has done and suffered on the earth, without being struck with the obvious fact that, in the brightest of its golden and Augustan periods, men were ignorant of what most concerned them to know, just because they

were ignorant of the higher and legitimate uses of knowledge. At no point of time, and in no quarter of the globe, has there been any absolute incapacity to understand the value of their relations with the external world about them. Even the Ethiopian or the Mongol might have done so much as this : But in some periods and in certain quarters, the human mind, under culture, has exhibited a compass and a power which excites our highest wonder ; and would excite the admiration of Angels, were it not that the objects on which so much majesty and strength of intellect were often expended, can call up no emotions in any pure intelligence but those of pity or contempt.

What are the most considerable and striking monuments and trophies of intellectual achievement, erected, or hung up along the pathway of the human mind, in its long journey from the morning of its existence down to our day ? Look at the country of the Hindoos, which was probably the cradle of all the arts and sciences.—There the human mind seems first to have attained its growth, which it did at a very early period. They were a learned and polished nation, in the usual acceptation of these terms, many hundreds of years before the christian era ; yes, and long before the renowned Greek had a being. They were astronomers, and mathematicians, and poets, and sculptors, and architects ; and what are the boasted monuments of the might of mental power sent by this people, from the remotest antiquity, down to our times ? Why, they constructed the Temples of Elora by hewing them out of a mountain of granite, with labor as stupendous as the folly that devised the work ; they instituted the *suttee*,* and eight and twenty widows have been known to be burned with the body of a single Rajah ; and they invented a magnificent mythology which

* Properly—*Sati*.

they peopled with something more than three hundred millions of gods !

In the Egyptians we have another learned and polished nation. Did they not build the Pyramids which have perplexed the learned of every generation since to discover for what earthly purpose they could have been designed ? and did they not sculpture the Sphynxes resembling nothing on earth or in Heaven ? They cultivated a knowledge of mechanics and hydraulics, to enable them, by their canals and sluices, to preserve to their use their national god, the Nile, which they believed to be in danger of being swallowed up by the Typhon. They cultivated a knowledge of chemistry and anatomy to enable them to embalm the dead. And they cultivated a knowledge of astronomy, in order to make divinities of the planets and the signs of the zodiac !

In Greece the human mind, at some lucid periods, did take a better direction. The variety and compass of its powers became more apparent than ever before, and the results of some of its best strength spent on subjects worthy of itself, are familiar to every modern scholar. In some of the fine arts they attained absolute perfection. And at this day, a Greek teaches mathematics in all our seminaries. They *speculated* also, to some valuable purpose, in philosophy and in physics. There was even in the mind of Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, a glimmering notion of the true and proper purpose of all culture and learning ; and this very notion, faint and undefined as it was, led them to renounce, to some extent, the mental dissipations of foregone philosophy, and turn to the observation of nature and of facts. But after all who does not see how much high capability—how much brilliant thought was expended on trifles and absurdities. Poetry ascended “the highest heaven of invention” to bring down the grossest figments of the brain as objects

of religious faith. Philosophy thought it had cured itself and the world of all follies, when its genius had achieved a system of dialectics by which it could incontrovertibly prove, not merely what was true, but every thing it wished to prove, whether true or false. And we know not how much time was spent by the master spirit of geometry in a resolute search after a convenient prop for his lever which was to upset the earth!

After intellect in the person of the Greek had spent its force, what a fearful and vacant space of time intervened, before it was aroused to the accomplishment of any thing better than had already been done. The Roman struggled hard to know and to do, what the Greek had known and done before him, and, that accomplished, thought himself wonderously wise and learned. During the whole period while Rome was the earth and the world, the human mind scarcely made an advance, except perhaps, in the single article of jurisprudence. After that, it was the highest ambition of learning, almost every where, just to know how much the Greek and the Roman had known. Even the light of so much knowledge as this would have been extinguished in Europe, but for the taper, fed from this fountain, which the priest burned in his cloister, and the reflection which came from the classic lamp of the despised Arabian. And when at last there came what is called the Revival of Learning, and, after Bacon, who seemed first to have comprehended the true uses of knowledge, had pointed out the true methods of acquiring it, still it was left to a very few only—here and there one, whose genius could no more be bound in classic fetters than Bacon's could in those of the iron ignorance of his age—to carry forward the work of investigation in the right path; for still, with the many, few as they were, who constituted the class of the educated, learning was little more than a knowledge of what the Greeks and

Romans had said and done, so far as the record of their sayings and doings had been preserved. And as to how much of this same error has been perpetuated even down to our times, I leave to your own reflection. We may at least flatter ourselves that, at length, we have got beyond the circle of the "seven arts," and the wisdom of the schools in which the classes were arranged according to the formula ;

"Loquitur; verba docet; verba ministrat;

"Canit; numerat; ponderat; colit astra."

It is true that in the tract of time over which I have now run, the Fine Arts, and Literature as distinguished from the sciences, were cultivated, and to such a degree that, in some of these departments, little is left to be done, but to take the profits of labors already past. Yet I can not consent to pass this part of our subject without remarking, that valuable as learning is in these departments yet they do not constitute the whole of learning or the best of it. The control and government of the conduct and actions of men through moral suasion, is among the earliest efforts of the human mind. The Philosophy of Life is easier and sooner taught than the Philosophy of Science; and the child is governed by motives which the man rejects. It is this kind of influence and control at which mere Literature and the Fine Arts aim; and the extent and value of their influence is, beyond doubt, vastly great. They are addressed to the heart through every sense. They soothe and tame the turbulent passions; they subdue the arrogant temper; they polish the rough and savage deportment—in short they do for man what nothing but religion can do without them. But it seems to me that we have come now to an age in which, without any neglect of these matters, in favor of the race of man and in aid of a religion which seeks to exalt and not to degrade him, something better is, or is to be, at-

tempted. So long ago as five hundred years before Christ, philosophy made a bold effort to pass from the wisdom of precept to the wisdom of science ; and surely it is not too soon yet to attempt to better the instruction of this example.

It is to be remarked that a condition of great ignorance, and even of extreme moral degradation, has not always been found incompatible with a very flourishing state of literature and the fine arts. Look at the history of poetry, to say nothing of sculpture and painting. Some of the best poetry ever imagined, existed in the East a thousand years before the christian era. Homer and Hesiod, Virgil and Horace, sung to generations whom we feel privileged to call barbarians. We should certainly count it a degradation, if obliged to go back in learning and refinement to the age of Dante or of Petrarch, or even to that of Shakspeare or of Milton ; and we certainly breathe a purer atmosphere than that which surrounded either the court of Augustus, or the court of Elizabeth.

I hope I shall not be understood as desiring to detract, in the least degree, from the proper merits and value of those beautiful creations of human genius, in any of their forms, to which I have now referred. All I mean to say is, that it is time something else was done, while these things must not be left undone ; that nearly up to the present period, almost the whole outlay of intellectual strength has been made either in building up monuments to perpetuate the fame of human folly, or in liberal efforts to exalt human nature and increase human happiness, without, however, laying the system and the hopes of improvement on the right foundation.

The evil which oppresses the world now, as it has done from the creation, is Ignorance. Fable has told us of the hundred heads of the Hydra, and the hundred hands of Briareus : But behold how much more wonderful fact is than fiction ; for here is a Monster whose heads and

hands have multiplied with the increase of population on the earth, till it is no hyperbole to compare them with the stars for number. It is Ignorance with which the mental power of the world has been warring from the beginning ; but the misfortune has been, as in the case of the fable, that two heads have sprouted from the trunk of every one that has been cut off ; and nothing now remains but to adopt the celebrated method of Hercules, and cauterize where we cut.

And we are not to make pilgrimages, my friends, in search of Ignorance. It lives in our lives, and dwells in our dwellings. Who can tell how many there are, even in our own enlightened age and country, who can still discover the movements of embattled and bloody hosts in the harmless coruscations of the northern Aurora ? How many are still the dupes of the absurd pretensions and impositions of judicial astrology ? How many miserable lunatics, pretending to be rational, still see, in an eclipse of the moon, nothing but the sickening effect of some enchanter's influence ? How many who are still firm believers in unlucky days ? How many who still draw disastrous omens from the commonest events in nature ; who can pick letters out of the wick of a burning candle ; brew a quarrel by spilling a little salt at the table ; sever love and friendship by the present of a pair of scissors ; and hear the death warrant of a friend in the ticking of an insect, or the flapping of a dove's wing at the window ? How many who still believe that the earthly interests of a new-born infant absolutely require that it should first be carried up stairs, before it is brought down ? How many grown up children are still cowards in the dark ? How many who still people an imaginary world of their own creation, with hosts of spectres, hobgoblins and brownies ? Nor let the educated flatter themselves that all the current ignorance of the period is confined to the circle of the uninstructed. For who can tell how many of the

Augustuses of our day confidently expect ill luck, if a stocking be put on with the wrong side out, or the left shoe be put on to the right foot? how many of our Lutherans see the hand of the devil in every meteoric phenomenon? how many of our Johnsons are believers in, or are themselves gifted with, the "second sight!"

But, my friends, Ignorance does not do the whole or the worst of her work, by shackling with idle fear and superstitious belief the free mind of man. Much is, indeed, done by shrouding the beauty of the earth in gloom, and shutting up the splendor of the heavens; by clothing a multitude of events in terror, which, rightly understood, would prove the harmony of nature with itself, and demonstrate at once the greatness and the beneficence of the Parent of the Universe. But Ignorance does more than this. When the mind is occupied with error, truth cannot enter; and when the heart is filled with superstition, it becomes the habitation of cruelty. Faith is the foundation on which conduct builds; and her banner, be it pure or be it bloody, is sure to float over every conquest made in her name. Under the lead of Ignorance, Persecution takes the field, and destroys with fire and with the sword. The earth is filled with violence, and the powers of universal nature are moved in elemental war, to satisfy the wrath of man.

It is obviously impossible, Gentlemen, after the time I have already occupied, that I should be able to sketch even an outline of the many triumphs which it must be the business of Education and Learning, rightly understood, yet to achieve over the rule and dominion of Ignorance. That we see the dawn of an Era of Intelligence in our day, I firmly believe. The political revolutions of the world for the last fifty years, have tended directly to such a result. Light has come from the fire of the flint, and the flash of the sword, and the shock of arms. The Spirit of Benevolence has been married to the Spirit of Wisdom.

The Press groans, and labours, and teems. Invention is busy with the methods of instruction. The vocation of the Schoolmaster has become the calling of every relation of life. Scientific Associations have been multiplied; and the number of those who are set on the walls and towers of the Temples of Learning, to watch the operations of nature, is greatly increased. Add to all this, that while Investigation and Discovery in various quarters are bringing out their results, the space between distant points has been more than half annihilated, and communication has become cheap and easy. The Messengers of knowledge no longer "*run* to and fro on the earth;" but, mounted on wings of vapour, are flying through the air in every direction, and scattering light and illumination as they go.

It is, Gentlemen, in an age characterized by such signs and symptoms as these, that you are to take your stand among the educated of the land. It is to you, in common with others similarly situated, to whom is committed the great charge of preserving the learning and spirit of the age, and of pushing forward the work of education and improvement. You are to hold fast every sound faith, and to grapple manfully with every error. Through your means, knowledge is not only to be increased, but it is to be diffused. The body of the people must be informed. They must be instructed in the use of their own faculties, and how those faculties are to be developed; in the practice of tracing their rights to the proper foundation; in the means of detecting the odious counterfeit of virtue and honour, in the person of the quack, the hypocrite, and the demagogue. They are to be taught to put a proper estimate on men, and a proper estimate on things. Station, and Rank, and Wealth must cease to be the tyrants they have been. Avarice, and Pomp, and Vanity must be pointed at and despised. Labour must command the honour and the reward which it merits. The sacred value of the Domestic Relations is to be cherished. The in-

tercourse of society is to be improved. The Peace of the hearth-stone, and the Peace of the neighborhood, and the Peace of the nation, are to be preserved. The wings of Folly must be clipped, in whatever form she flies; and Infidelity must be made to hang the head for shame, in the presence of that blaze of light which science shall shed on the truths of Revelation.

But how, my friends, is it that results like these are to be compassed and effected? The way is easy, and it is open. We know the enemy we have to contend with—which is Ignorance; and we know where to find him, though he hath his habitation in darkness. We are acquainted with his haunts and his associations; and the weapon of his certain destruction is in our hands. That weapon is **LIGHT**—the light of Nature added to the light of Revelation—the light of Natural Truth added to the light of Revealed Truth—the light of Fact and of Reason added to the light of Religion—the light of genuine Learning added to the light of a genuine Faith—a Light which heretofore has not been permitted to burn with brightness and purity, chiefly because it was not originally kindled at the right fountain; a Light which has often gone out, in the keeping of unfaithful vestals; which has often been hid, when it should have been made manifest; which has always been, more or less, fed from sources which could not supply or support it; which, at best, has been kept as a lamp to the feet of the few, when it should have been made to illumine the pathway of the many; which, for the most part, having only glimmered faintly from a few sequestered and solitary places, has served but to deepen the shadows of the general gloom around them. This is that Light which is now, we think, beginning to be fed from better and purer sources; which has its fountain in Nature; which is to be supplied from her fulness, by the aid of the Educated; which ought to

be made, and may be made to increase, spreading wide and mounting high, and passing rapidly from heart to heart, and from dwelling to dwelling, till all the Valleys shall answer to all the Mountain-tops in one universal and healthful glow of brightness and illumination.

My Friends, I am no dreamer about the perfectibility of man : But I entertain a firm conviction that his situation on the earth is susceptible of vast improvement ; and that as yet, he has never attained a moiety either of the comparative perfection, or of the happiness, of which his nature and earthly condition are susceptible. I believe that he must work out this improvement for himself, under the guidance of Reason and Religious Faith ; that his advancement must be carried forward under the lead of the Educated ; that this end is to be secured only by the general diffusion of knowledge, which knowledge must consist chiefly in an acquaintance with those Laws of God which have been so universally neglected and despised, under the denomination of the Laws of Nature ; that such a general diffusion of knowledge is entirely practicable, and may be effected, if in no other way, at least through legislative beneficence, which all governments, and governments in our country above all others, ought to afford : And finally, Gentlemen, I believe, in reference to yourselves, and as indicating the last word of counsel which I have to offer you on this occasion, and at parting, that, whatever may be your chosen or allotted employment and situation in life, by the aid which you will be able to furnish, and which you shall furnish, towards improving the condition of the human race on the earth in the manner referred to, you will render the best possible service in your power to render, to the cause of your Country, to the cause of Liberty, to the cause of Religion, to the cause of Man—of Man in his home here, and in his home *there*—of Man mortal, and of Man immortal.

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